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無限の住人

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

Blood of a Thousand

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL: BLOOD OF A THOUSAND
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

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Blood of a Thousand

DARK HORSE COMICS®

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Swastika

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal* Manga, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika* (a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from su — "well" + asti — "be is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage) including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika* which moves in a counterclockwise direction and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The arms of the swastika, which point in a clockwise direction are generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night and often for magical practices. It is important that readers understand that the *swastika* has ancient and honorable origins and it is those that apply to this story which takes place in the 18th century [ca. 1782-3]. *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. These meanings did not exist until 1910.*

The Artwork

The creator of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror imaging his artwork. Normally all of our manga are first copied to a mirror image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and re-pasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are of course some sequences where it was impossible to do this and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue

Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, we decided to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the so-retouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

PROLOGUE: CRIMINAL

KAWA
BAAWW
HAH! SO MUCH FOR HIM!! NYA-HA-HA-HA-HA!!
FROM NOW ON I GUESS THE TOUGHEST MAN IN JAPAN
ISN'T MY BROTHER OR MISTER "ONE HUNDRED" MANJI
...BUT ME? NYA-HA-HA-HA-HA!!
LITTLE OL' ME?!

WHDD
AAH ?!
YOU KNOW IT STILL HURTS KIND OF A SURPRISE
I GUESS THAT MEANS..
...I'M STILL HUMAN

I'VE BEEN AMBUSHING AND KILLING PEOPLE FOR TEN YEARS!
DON'T TELL ME I MISSED?
SPLASH
TAKE A GOOD LOOK, BUDDY
YOU'RE A DAMNED FINE SHOT EH?!
THANKS TO YOU I CAN'T MOVE MY GODDAMN LEGS
SO I KNOW YOU WON'T MIND IF I KIND OF CHEAT HERE
WRATH OF HEAVEN, MAN
KA-CHUNK
KNNSSH
KA-CHUNK

SO THAT WAS GYOBUTSU "JOHNNY"
THE FAMOUS FAKE PRIEST COLLECTING BOUNTIES ON CRIMINALS WHO COME TO CONFESSION
FLSSH
SLSH
FLSSH
SLSH
WELL, MY WRIGGLING LITTLE FRIENDS LOOKS LIKE YOU GUYS SAVED MY ASS AGAIN EH?!

HEY BROTHER! DO YA BRING ME SOMETHIN' HUH? HUH?
O-YO... IS THE OLD LADY AROUND?
OOH, MANJI! YOUR CLOTHES KINDA SMELL LIKE BLOOD!
SEE?!
HO! AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU WENT OFF TO CHURCH
BUT BACK YOU CAME WITH A WET BLADE.
YEAH I WENT BUT I'M ALL FINISHED I KILLED GOD

THOSE BLOOD-WORMS YOU PUT IN ME
THEY SAVED MY GODDAMN LIFE AGAIN OLD LADY

THAT SON OF A BITCH BLEW A HOLE IN MY HEAD THE SIZE OF MY THUMB
BUT CHECK IT OUT NOW NOT A DAMN MARK

HO HO HO..

SO... OLD LADY. I WANNA KNOW...
...HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO LIVE ON IN THIS STINKIN' BODY?!
HEH HEH
I MEAN HELL... I TAKE A BULLET THROUGH THE BRAIN LIKE IT WAS NOTHIN' I WHAT KINDA FRIGGIN' MONSTER AM I?!
I KNOW THEY CAN'T KILL ME. SO MY SWORD WORK'S GETTIN' SLOPPIER BY THE DAY!

HUH! YOU DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT THE TROUBLES I'VE SEEN BECAUSE OF YOU--
HEY!
YOU BETTER PAY ATTENTION, GRANDMA! LOOK IT'S MY WHOLE--
OKAY YOU ASKED FOR IT
FOOLISH BOY. THIS OLD LADY'S FULL OF BLOODWORMS!
HA! GOING TO TAKE A CHOP AT ME, ARE YOU?
HAH ?!
IT'S TRULY ASTOUNDING HOW MANY PEOPLE DIE IN THIS WORLD WITH MOST OF THEIR DREAMS AND DESIRES UNFULFILLED ESPECIALLY YOU SAMURAI TYPES. HMM?
THANKS TO THEM I'VE LIVED A FULL EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS
JUST LIKE MY NAME--"YAOBIKUNI"*
FOR THOSE PEOPLE THE LAMA MONKS FOUND A WAY TO LIVE LONGER...THE ULTIMATE LIFE EXTENDER-
--THE KESSEN-CHUI THE HOLY BLOOD-WORMS
* "SKIN OF EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS"

NO ONE CAN LIVE WITHOUT A PURPOSE, MY SON DOMINATION CREATION REVENGE PENANCE--
ISN'T IT ABOUT TIME YOU TOLD THIS OLD LADY ABOUT YOUR DESIRES...?
AND WHAT DROVE YOUR LITTLE SISTER MAD...?
"WE WENT THAT WAY! BE CAREFUL!"
"IS IT THE HATAMOTO KILLER?"
"IF WE BRING HIM IN, THE BOUNTY--"
"DON'T BE A FOOL! IF WE FIND HIM, WE KILL HIM! BEFORE HE KILLS US!"

MACH! YOU KNOW I LOVE PUTTING MY ARM AROUND YOU
BUT LET'S CALL IT QUITS ABOUT HERE. YOU MAY BE MY WIFE BUT FOR ME TO HAVE TO LEAN ON A WOMAN WILL, IT'S JUST A SAMURAI THING, YOU KNOW?
YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT SAVING FACE? YOU DON'T HAVE ANY TO SAVE. MY DEAR, AFTER YOU GOT SICK IN FRONT OF ALL THOSE PEOPLE
I GUESS I SHOULD LEARN HOW TO DRINK WITHOUT MAKING A FOOL OF MYSELF
YEAH NOW I UNDERSTAND HOW A THIRD-RATE CLOWN FEELS
?!
STILL, WHAT FUN'S A BANQUET WITHOUT ENOUGH SAKE TO CHEAPSKATES! SAY HOW ABOUT ANOTHER SHOT BEFORE BEDTIME?
WHAT'S GOING ON?
AH! OFFICER TATSUMASA
IT'S THE CRIMINAL WHO ASSASSINATED LORD HORII SIR! WE'VE LOST FIVE MEN ALREADY JUST TRACKING HIM DOWN!
SWOOSH
UNG!
LOOKS LIKE THE HATCHO-BORI AREA...
I THINK MY SISTER LIVES AROUND HERE YEAH, NOW I'M SURE OF IT
CRAZY BROAD WHYD YOU HAVE TO MARRY A GODDAMN COP?!
CAN'T LOOK AFTER YOUR BROTHER? NO MORE EH?! NOW THAT I GOT A PRICE ON MY HEAD

MACHI IT SEEMS I'VE GOT SOME WORK TO DO
YOU GO ON AHEAD AND WARM UP THE SAKE
I'LL BE ALONG IN A FEW MINUTES
EH? BUT I THOUGHT
MAKE SURE YOU GET THE BATH NOT NICE AND HOT
!!
SLSSSK

YOU DON'T NEED TO TELL ME YOUR NAME. YOUR LIFE WILL BE OVER IN A FEW MINUTES ANYWAY!
NO KIDDING ?
SHAK
ALL RIGHT YOU IN THERE! THIS IS SAITO D TATSUMASA, OFFICER OF THE LAW FROM THE HOUSE OF KATSUKAWA!
HMM. I GUESS NOT EVERY KENGO IS CAREFUL
I'VE HEARD A LOT ABOUT YOU PAL.
KEHAK
PTCK
THEY SAY IT WAS YOU WHO CUT UP THE HATAMOTO LORD HORI SHIGENORU TWO YEARS AGO.

WAIT A SEC. SAITŌ TATSUMASA?
I'VE HEARD THAT NAME BEFORE
HUH GODDAMN COPS.. WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE A SAMURAI FOR? EH?!
SO DO YOU HAVE ANY LAST WORDS ?
THE WAY OF THE SAMURAI MEANS FINDING THE RIGHT PLACE TO DIE. EVER HEAR THAT ONE?
YEAH ALL SO FINE AND NOBLE ME I'M JUST A SCUMBAG WHO ACCIDENTALLY GOT BORN INTO A SAMURAI FAMILY BUT WHEN I HEAR THINGS LIKE THAT I THINK HEY DYING LIKE A SAMURAI NOT A BAD WAY TO GO EH?
IT MEANS THIS, PAL-- SOMETHING WORTH DYING FOR! Y'KNOW THINKING ABOUT IT NOW THAT'S ALL I'VE EVER WANTED
I KILLED PLENTY OF PEOPLE ON THAT BASTARD HORII'S ORDERS OFF WITH THEIR HEADS! I NEVER DOUBTED THEY WERE BAD. BAD. BAD POSED LIKE A HERO I DID BUT THE REAL BAD GUYS...
THEY'RE ALWAYS RIGHT UNDER YOUR DAMN NOSE!
MY BIG BOSS SHIGENOBU. HE WENT AND JACKED UP THE TAXES WITHOUT TELLING THE SHOGUN, SKIMMED IT RIGHT OFF THE TOP THE FOLK I KILLED WERE NOTHIN' BUT FARMERS WHO WERE GOING TO TELL THE AUTHORITIES HELL, THEY KNEW THEY'D BE KILLED JUST FOR BOTHERING THEIR betters BUT THEY WERE STILL GOING TO THEY!
WOULD YOU DIE FOR A MAN LIKE THAT? EH?!
OR MAYBE I'M THE DUMB ONE HERE WHICH?!
BUSHIDO THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR, FOLLOWS THE ANCIENT CODE OF GI OF RIGHTEOUSNESS
IF THERE BE ANY WHO STRAY FROM THAT PATH, THE SAMURAI MUST PUNISH THEM WITH JUSTICE IN HIS HEART
I GUESS YOU'RE A GUY WHO NEVER HEARD OF LOYALTY
BUT ENOUGH! I DON'T NEED TO HEAR ANY MORE YOUR EXCUSES ARE MEANINGLESS
I DON'T FEEL SORRY FOR YOU THE LAW IS THE LAW
YOUR TIME IS UP CRIMINAL! NOW YOUR SOUL MUST BE SWALLOWED BY THE DARKNESS!

TWO YEARS AGO EXACTLY FIVE DAYS AFTER THAT INCIDENT...
HE WAS A STRAIGHT ARROW BELIEVED IN LOYALTY HE NEVER TIRED TO MAKE EXCUSES
TWO OF HORII'S BODYGUARDS TOOK THE FALL... THEY COMMITTED SEPPUKU
IN THE NAME OF MY FATHER FOR H S REPUTATION AND FOR THE LIVES OF THE NINETY-NINE OFFICERS WHO HAVE DIED TRY ME TO GET YOU
THE NAME OF ONE OF THEM WAS SAITO KAZUSANOKAMI TATSUE...MY FATHER!!
...IS THAT ENOUGH? I THINK I HAVE REASON TO KILL YOU.

TATSUMASA!
?!
MACHI... ?! AH!!
!!
MACHI! I TOLD YOU TO GO HOME!
WOMEN AND DUELS DON'T MIX, YOU IDIOT!
MANJI...?
PAY ATTENTION, FOOL!
!!
HO! WAIT!!
!!

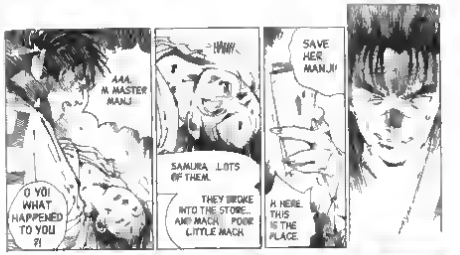
YEAH, THAT'S IT
NOW I REMEMBER
SAITŌ TATSUMASA
THE SAME NAME...
AH!

AS MACHI'S HUSBAND I

BIG BROTHER MAAAAN JII HEE HEE!
YEAH ?
I GOT A SEEE CRET! I FOUND A GREAT BIG BEANCAKE RIGHT IN THE ROAD WANNA BEANCAKE WITH YOUR TEA?
MACH! THIS ISN'T A BEANCAKE IT'S HORSE SHIT
WOW GO WASH YOUR HANDS !
NOT IN THE DAMN DRINKING WATER !!
LISTEN OLD LADY...
MACH! MAY LOOK AND ACT LIKE A KID BUT SHE'S TWENTY THREE THIS YEAR

I USED TO THINK THE BEST A SAMURAI COULD DREAM OF WAS A CHANCE TO CUT OPEN HIS OWN BELLY BUT LIFE IS SO DAMN WEIRD, GRANNY
I COMMIT SEPPUKU NOW SHE DIES IN A DITCH SOMEWHERE, ALL ALONE.
DON'T GIMME THAT CRAP, YOU OLD HAG! EVEN YOU...
YOU SHOULD HAVE THOUGHT OF THAT SOONER! THAT'S WHY I STUFFED YOU FULL OF WORMS, SONNY--SO YOU'D EVENTUALLY NOTICE.
YOU'RE QUIETER THAN THE DEVIL HIMSELF BUT YOU'RE STILL AFRAID TO DIE EH...?!
FANCY WORDS FOR CHEAP EXCUSES
I'M A NUN YOUNG MAN I CAN'T DIE UNTIL I'VE SAVED THE SOULS OF ALL YOU POOR SINNERS IN JAPAN
BWPSCH !!
SPLAT
HUH
WHO THE HELL ASKED TO BE SAVED?!
WHO ASKED ? HO-HO NOW THAT
THAT'S A FUNNY THING TO SAY
THE FIRST TIME I CAUGHT SIGHT OF YOU MY SON
YOUR EYES WERE PRACTICALLY BEGGING FOR SALVATION!

"WHAT'S THE POINT OF SHOVELING ABOUT KILLING SOME PEOPLE, MY DEAR MANJI? IT'S SAMURAI JUSTICE.
"IF YOU REALLY WANT TO BE FREE, THEN FIRST GIVE UP THE SWORD!
"REPENTANCE, MY SON... IT HAS A LOT MORE HOLY MARKET VALUE THAN SEPPUKU.
NOK NOK NOK
UNG
NOK NOK
"WHY DON'T YOU SHAVE YOUR HEAD WHEN THE SUN COMES UP AND BECOME A MONK? YOU COULD TRAVEL JAPAN WITH ME. HAHAH!
I ALREADY SAID I'M NOT GOING WITH YOU!
O YŌ ?!


AAA M MASTER MANJ
O YO! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU ?!
SAMURA LOTS OF THEM.
THEY BROKE INTO THE STORE AND MACH POOR LITTLE MACH
SAVE HER MANJI!
H HERE. THIS IS THE PLACE.

HUH. DIDN'T I GIVE ANY TIME SETTING HERE, DO YA?
SHEETH SKRITCH
THE NAME'S SHIDO...SHIDO HISHIYASU! DEPUTY HEAD OF THE SHINSEN-GUMI, THE WORLD'S BADDEST RONIN GANG
NO ONE ASKED FOR A FRIGGIN' INTRODUCTION SKINHEAD!
LET MACHI GO!
IF YOU HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING TO HER, I'LL LET YOU LEAVE.
LET US LEAVE? OH, HOW VERY NICE OF YOU, KIND SIR!
HAH HAH
WE'RE SO HAPPY! LET'S ALL GO HOME RIGHT NOW!!
HAH!! WE AIN'T GOIN' NOWHERE! LAST NIGHT YOU KILLED MY BROTHER, JOHNNY!
HE'S AROU TO HOLD KIS WAKE BUT YOU
YOU DI SHOW STINK RESPEC HAVE DUGHTTA THIS S OF YOURS TEACH YA LESSON, HU
YEA! SHE L PRET HOT F RETA KEY WHAT'I TH
HEY, DO SOMETHING!

SO HERE'S THE DEAL, PAL--YOU FIGHT ALL OF US HERE TONIGHT
BOING BOING!
ONE ON ONE. STARTING WITH ME! YOU BEAT ALL OF US, WE LET HER FREE, ALL CHARGES DROPPED!
--NO, WAIT!
ALL R!--
CHANGED MY MIND... FIGURE IT'S A BAD IDEA
LET'S TRY SOMETHING ELSE, OKAY?
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS CRAP?! SCREW YOU, BUDDY!
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CHOICE, KEY?!
BETTER LISTEN UP, BALDY!
I WANT TO WASH MY HANDS OF THIS STINKING CHOP CHOP BUSINESS, SEE?
"IF YOU REALLY WANT TO BE FREE, THEN FIRST GIVE UP THE SWORD!"

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT WE'RE GONNA SLICE UP YOUR ASS!
THIS AIN'T GOOD...
BUT HEY YOU WON'T WANT TO PLAY THAT'S COOL. GUESS WE'LL JUST HAVE SOME FUN WITH YOUR CUTE LITTLE S*STER INSTEAD HUH?
SHUT YOUR FACE! I'M SAYING I'LL FIGHT YOU BAREHANDED!
SHE'S NOT PART OF THIS LET HER GO NOW YOU CHEAP PUNK!
MAN, AM I REALLY HEARING THIS CRAP? ARE YOU REALLY THE "ONE HUNDRED COMPISE" GUY. KEEP HEARING ABOUT MISTER "TWELVE BLADES" HIMSELF?
UH, BOSS ?
I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU TOUCH HER!
YOU BASTARD !
GET YOUR FILTHY HANDS
TWDD
ENOUGH WITH THE BULLSHIT, MAN!!
DON'T GIMME THIS "BAREHANDED" CRAP, EH?! YOU'RE A GOD DAMN SAMURAI!
YOU DO THAT WHERE DOES IT LEAVE ME, EH?! I GOT TWENTY GUYS TOGETHER TO FIGHT THE ONE OF YOU!
WHY DON'T YOU ALL PLAY TAG?
IF YOU'RE GOOD BOYS I'LL WATCH YOU
HEH!
SO, UH, BOSS ?
WHY YOU!! I OUGHTTA—!
HUH ?!
OKAY LET THE GIRL GO
THE HELL WITH IT. I OVERESTIMATED THE GUY. I DON'T WASTE TIME ON TRASH LIKE HIM.
WELL, THERE YA ARE HE SAID YOU CAN GO
MANJI !
THIS AIN'T MY FAULT—I WARNED YA I'D HAVE SOME FUN WITH HER!
DIDN'T I MANJI ?!

HEAVEN ABOVE, HELL BELOW!
CHOK
SSSHH

HNNK!
THE SISTER DIES, THE BROTHER FOLLOWS
SEE YA, PAL! IN THE NEXT LIFE YOU TWO CAN HANG OUT TOGETHER !
YOU SATISIFIED FOOL? IS THIS PATHETIC WAY TO GO GOOD ENOUGH FOR YA, HUH?!
IT'S ALL YOUR OWN DAMN FAULT !!
HAAH!
?!
WAAAH! SON OF A BITCH!! WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU, MAN?!
SOME KINDA FREAKIN' ZOMBIE ?!

UGGH! FISH!
HUH ?
MY FAULT? YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT
HER HUSBAND DEAD
HER LOSING HER MIND ALL MY FAULT
AND THE FUNNY THING IS SHE COULDN'T EVEN HATE ME FOR IT
SHE JUST DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ANYMORE.
THANKS BALDY ! GUESS IT REALLY IS MY ONLY CHOICE.
I FEEL BETTER NOW
COOL! SO YOU'RE GONNA FIGHT? ONE ON ONE?
EH? OH RIGHT
NAW INSTEAD
SHUNK
SO KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE BLADES BUDDY! SEE IF YOU CAN COUNT 'EM!
SHUNK
I'LL SHOW YOU WHETHER I CAN STILL DO A HUNDRED
SSSSS
CHAAK

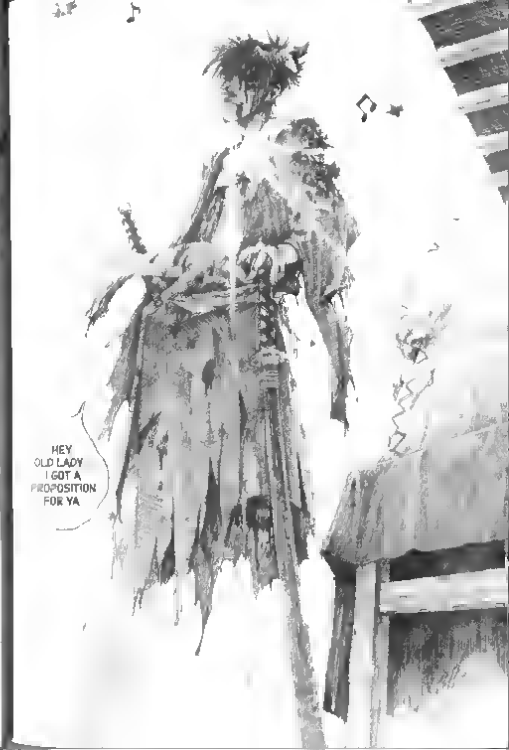
I...I COULDN'T...

UH OH!
MACHI.

IT'S LIKE SKINHEAD HERE SAID HELL, IF I COULD I'D LOVE TO LET THEM KILL ME
BUT I DON'T EVEN HAVE THAT CHOICE!
CHECK IT OUT HERE'S MY DAMN BODY ALL FIXED UP AGAIN AND SO I

A WORD TO ALL THE NEW FRIENDS I'VE MADE HERE TODAY! I'M HERE TO HELP YOU JOIN YOUR BOSS ON THE OTHER SIDE!
WHEN YOU GET THERE GIVE HIM A COUPLE A FLOWERS FOR ME, OKAY?!

AAH!
HAIEEYAARGGH!


HEY OLD LADY I GOT A PROPOSITION FOR YA

HEH, HEH. AND YOU'VE NEVER LOOKED HANDSOMER YOUNG MAN.
NOT THAT KIND OF PROPOSITION! LOOK...COUPLE A YEARS BACK, I KILLED A HUNDRED OF THE GOOD GUYS INCLUDING MACHI'S HUSBAND NOW TO PAY THAT OFF
HOW ABOUT I SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE CUTTING DOWN A THOUSAND OF THE BAD GUYS?
WOW, THAT SOUNDS LIKE LOTS T
JUST CAN'T BRING YOURSELF TO GIVE UP THE SWORD HMM? OH YOU'RE HOPELESS, YOUNG MAN BUT...
...WHY NOT?! GO AHEAD AND DO WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT. IF YOU FULFILL THIS VOW THE KESSEN-CHU WILL LEAVE YOU ALONE
HEH
FWHUDD
EEEK !! MASTER MAN..!! !!
LIVED THROUGH ANOTHER ONE
OH, NO!! SOMEBODY HELP HIM!
HA, NO! HE WON'T DIE. NOT THIS YOUNG FELLOW! JUST LEAVE HIM BE. O YO LEAVE HIM BE!
D... DAMN... YOU!
YOU YOU KNOW
I'M THE ASSISTANT SWORD MASTER OF THE MUTOHCHI-RYU, DOJO!
IS THAT WHY YOU'RE COMMITTING THIS OUTRAGE ?!
WHGYOK

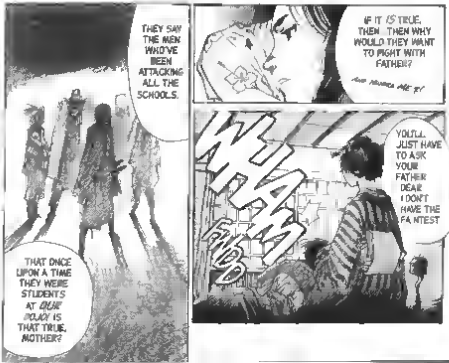
CONQUEST

MOTHER IT'S ALREADY SO LATE. I WONDER IF FATHER'S HAVING AN AFFAIR...?

WHAT AN IMAGINATION YOU HAVE. YOU SILLY CHILD! WHY DO YOU ALWAYS FEEL YOU MUST DREAM UP THESE STRANGE STORIES?
YOU'LL SEE! TOMORROW WE'LL BE JOINING THOSE POOR BEGGARS ADRIFT IN THE BACK ALLEYS OF EDO.

I TOLD HIM THIS MORNING MOTHER "DADDY" SAID, "TODAY TURN FOURTEEN! IS THAT SO?" HE SAYS "WELL... THAT DECIDES IT
TONIGHT I'LL COME STRAIGHT HOME WITHOUT A SIP OF SAKE." AND HE'S NEVER BROKEN A PROMISE TO ME, MOTHER

DON'T YOU LISTEN DEAR? HE SAID THERE WAS A SPECIAL MEETING AT THE DOJO TONIGHT
SOMETHING ABOUT THOSE ATTACKS ON THE OTHER SCHOOLS, I IMAGINE...
SIS, MAMA DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THIS, ?


THEY SAY THE MEN WHO'VE BEEN ATTACKING ALL THE SCHOOLS.
THAT ONCE UPON A TIME THEY WERE STUDENTS AT OUR DOJO! IS THAT TRUE, MOTHER?
IF IT IS TRUE, THEN, THEN WHY WOULD THEY WANT TO FIGHT WITH FATHER?
YOU'LL... JUST HAVE TO ASK YOUR FATHER DEAR. I DON'T HAVE THE FAINTEST

O O-TOKI
OH NO!
FATHER! MAMA, LOOK!
DADDY'S HURT!!
WHAT HAPPENED, FATHER!? WHO DID TH-
FORGET ABOUT ME!
O-TOKI TAKE RIN AND FLEE, QUICKLY!! THE MUTENICHI-RYŪ DOJO
WILL END TONIGHT!

SO... IN OTHER WORDS, WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY IS...
AM I RIGHT?
"...DAMNED IF I'LL SUBMIT TO YOU BASTARDS!"

I...I MUST DEFEND MY DOJO
...TO THE DEATH!

I KNOW, I KNOW... I UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS ALL TOO WELL...
BUT IT APPEARS IT'S GOING TO BE A WASTED EFFORT

WE'VE KILLED ALL YOUR STUDENTS, ASANO! EVERYONE EXCEPT YOU, THE MASTER HIMSELF. ALL ARE DEAD!
SO DO THE SECRET TEACHINGS OF YOUR DOJO VANISH FOREVER! YES OR NO? IT'S ALL UP TO YOU.

KRAK
AAGGH!!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
HOW COULD YOU
YOU MONSTERS!
I SWEAR I'LL KILL YOU ALL! HERE AND NOW!
...OR DIE TRYING!
HMM
WHAT SHOULD WE MAKE OF THIS HONEST BUT SIMPLEMINDED REPLY, KUROI?
CHIK
WAIT!
IF YOU'RE GOING TO KILL US THEN WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO KNOW WHY YOU HAVE ATTACKED OUR SCHOOL SO VICIOUSLY!
JUST ANSWER US THAT WILL YOU?!

THEY SAY YOU GENTLEMEN ONCE WALKED THE SAME PATH AS US THE PATH OF THE MUTENICHI RYÛ SCHOOL OF SWORDSMANSHIP...
SO HOW WILL YOU MAKE PEACE WITH YOUR ANCESTORS AFTER THIS BETRAYAL?!

INTERESTING WORDS
IF OUR "ANCESTORS" COULD HEAR THEM, WHAT WOULD THEY SAY, I WONDER ?
O-TOKI !
TOUCH MY WIFE YOU BASTARD! AND I'LL...
MOVE AGAIN AND SHE LOSES AN EAR!
VERY WELL, MADAM
YOU DO HAVE A RIGHT, PERHAPS EVEN AN OBLIGATION TO KNOW.
MASTER ASANO TONIGHT YOU WILL DIE.
SO MAYBE YOU HAD BETTER HEAR THIS FIRST.
THEN YOU CAN LOOK BACK ON OUR PERFORMANCE TONIGHT
FROM THE AFTERLIFE!
THE FIRST ACT IN OUR LONG LONG DRAMA OF CONQUEST BEGAN IN THIS VERY DOJO
" FIFTY YEARS AGO IT WAS THE STAGE WHERE IT ALL BEGAN. MY GRANDFATHER, ANOTSU SABURO, AND YOUR FATHER, ASANO TAKAYUKI, WERE TWO KENKO COMPETING FOR THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE THE SECRET INNER TEACHINGS OF THE MUTENICHI RYU-
AN HONOR GRANTED BUT ONCE IN A GENERATION
FROM HIKIGAYA'S "HIKIGAYA MANGA"

"ONE DAY, THE TWO MEN AND THEIR MASTER WERE SURROUNDED BY BANDITS
EACH USING HIS FAMILY HONED SWORDSMANSHIP, A SAMURAI KILLED FOUR AND ANOTSU EIGHT OF THEIR ASSAILANTS."
I AM TO BE EXPELLED ?!
WHY, MASTER? I CAN FIND NO REASON FOR THIS!
I DON'T BELIEVE MY TECHNIQUE HAS FAILED ANY TEST
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH TECHNIQUE, ANOTSU.
YOUR USE OF THE SWORD HAS NO CLASS.
MUTSUHIKO-KYŌ CERTIFICATE OF LICENSE
BUT WHY?! YOU WERE THERE, MASTER! MY SWORD CLAIMED THE GREATER VICTORY!
AND YET WAIT !!
NOW I SEE IT! I SEE THROUGH YOUR PLOT!
YOU TALK ABOUT "CLASS"—
BUT TAKAYUKI'S YOUR OWN SON! THAT'S WHY FROM THE VERY BEGINNING YOU NEVER HAD ANY INTENTION—
OF SHARING THE SECRETS WITH AN OUTSIDER LIKE ME!
ANOTSU.

YOU KNOW THE WORDS OF THE MUTENKEI-RYŪ DOCTRINE. "SKILL WITH THE SWORD BEGINS WITH RECORLIAC"
NO MATTER HOW STRONG THEY MAY BE, THOSE OAFS WHO SCOFF AT FORM CAN NEVER COMPREHEND THE WAY OF THE SWORD
IN YESTERDAY'S BATTLE, YOU FOUGHT WITH A SWORD IN EACH HAND—ONE A BARBARIAN'S BLADE FROM FOREIGN LANDS!
OUR MUTENKEI-RYŪ HAS NO TRADITION OF TWO-SWORD TECHNIQUE! MOREOVER, USING A BARBARIAN SWORD IS INEXCUSABLE! EVEN IN A MOMENT OF RASHNESS!
TAKAYUKI! SAI SOMETHING! I KNOW YOU AGREE!
ANOTSU, YOU ARE THE SON OF A CLOTH MERCHANT. YOUR CONFUSION REGARDING THESE CONCEPTS MAY BE UNDERSTANDABLE FOR A COMMONER
BUT IF WE DO NOT OBEY OUR DOCTRINE, THE MUTENKEI-RYŪ SCHOOL SHALL NOT STAND!
MERCY!
PLEASE, MASTER! I ONLY
BUT, MASTER! THAT THAT WAS ONLY TO PROTECT YOU!
THAT WAS WHY! AND NOW YOU !
I ONLY TRIED TO DEFEND YOU, THAT'S ALL!
DAMN IT ! PROTECTED YOU! YOU BASTARD !!

"THE WAY OF THE SWORD" WHAT IS IT TO YOU, MASTER ASANO?
IF WE LIVED TODAY IN A WORLD AT WAR, THEN-
ETIQUETTE! FORM! COULD YOU PREACH YOUR PRECIOUS DOCTRINE THEN?
SWORDSMANSHIP WOULD BE NO PARLOR GAME FOR A SOFT, WEAK AGE. NOT IT WOULD BE TRIUMPH OR DIE!
I THINK WHAT FATE WOULD AWAIT THOSE WHO FORGOT THE REAL RULE. "THE WAY OF THE SWORD IS THE WAY OF VICTORY!"
MASTER ASANO.
WHEN I SEE YOU AND YOUR HAPPY LITTLE FAMILY IT'S ALL SO CLEAR

THE CONTEMPT YOUR SAMURAI SOCIETY TURNS ON SOMEONE EXPELLED FROM A FAMOUS SCHOOL IS HARSHER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.
THE BETTER YOU ARE WITH YOUR SWORD, THE MORE YOU'RE DESPISED AS A HERETIC. THERE'S NO WAY BACK TO THE LIGHT EVER!
MY FATHER WENT OVER THE EDGE, POISONED BY HIS HATE AND DESPAIR. BUT HE HAD ONE DEMAND FOR ME ON HIS DEATHBED
"NO MATTER HOW MANY GENERATIONS IT TAKES, SHOW THOSE FOOLS THE POWER OF OUR SWORD!"
LOOK, I UNDERSTAND YOUR LOYALTY.
BUT THAT WAS FIFTY YEARS AGO!
AND... AND MY FATHER, WAAH!!!
TO HIS DYING DAY HE WAS TORTURED BY HIS OWN WEAKNESS--
YOU THINK HEARING THAT NOW CHANGES ANYTHING?!
OUR MINDS ARE MADE UP!

WE WILL DESTROY EVERY SWORD SCHOOL IN THE COUNTRY AND UNIFY THEM UNDER OUR CONTROL! WE'LL SHOW YOU PAPER WARRIORS...
...THERE IS ONLY ONE WAY OF THE SWORD--OUR WAY! THE ITTO-RYU!!

?!
MIIN
HOW DARE YOU ?!

NO ONE'S ASKING FOR YOUR OPINION ANYWAY. ALL THIS TALK TIRES ME.
IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO DIE, ASANO!!
HAVE YOU LOST YOUR MIND ?!

THOSE TWO WOMEN SIDED YOU
GENTLEMEN! ONCE WE'RE FINISHED HERE, YOU CAN HAVE AS MUCH OF THE GOOD WIFE AS YOU PLEASE!

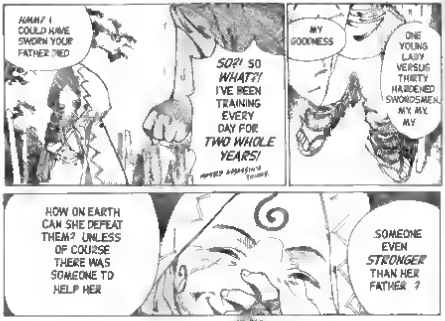
YOU BASTARD !
I'LL--!

BUT DON'T TOUCH THE YOUNG GIRL... I THINK YOU'LL AGREE.
ASSAULTING CHILDREN SHOWS NO CLASS.

AHOSI
!!!

NEKUSTINE: KUKINE, HEAD OF THE MUSIC OF LIGHT

THAT EXPLAINS IT.
THERE'S SLAUGHTER IN YOUR HEART. IT BURNS RIGHT THROUGH YOU.
WHO ARE YOU ?
THE NAME'S YAOBIKUNI DEARIE. I'VE BEEN LIVING IN THIS GRAVEYARD FOR A SEASON.
GOING ON EIGHT HUNDRED YEARS NOW, IT IS
OLD LADY YOU CAN'T MAKE ME LAUGH. NOT WITH SUCH A JOKE.
OH MY IT SOUNDS LIKE A JOKE. DOES IT?
HO-HO-HO. THEN I'LL LEAVE IT BE.
AH! WHAT NOW? WHATEVER WILL YOU DO, LITTLE GIRL?
FIRST I'LL KILL THEM. EVERY LAST ONE...!
NYA
HA HA HA HA HO HO!!
WHAT A REFRESHING YOUNG LADY!
HUH?! WHAT'S SO FUNNY?!
YOU OLD HAG!!
THEY'LL ALL BE OLD GEEZERS BY THEN!
AH! HO OH, NOTHING. MY DEAR DREAMS MAKE LIFE WORTH LIVING, I SAY.
WELL I SHALL PRAY FOR YOUR SON TO GRANT HIS MOTHER'S WISHES
I'M GOING TO DO IT MYSELF /
I REALLY AM FOR MY MOTHER
SHE MAY BE WAITING FOR ME. EVEN NOW
YOU HAVE SOME SKILL WITH THE SWORD, DEARIE ?
FROM MY FATHER'S SCHOOL... MAYBE THIRD DEGREE.


HMM? I COULD HAVE SWORN YOUR FATHER DIED
SO?! SO WHAT?! I'VE BEEN TRAINING EVERY DAY FOR TWO WHOLE YEARS!
MY GOODNESS
ONE YOUNG LADY VERSUS THIRTY HARDENED SWORDSMEN. MY MY. MY
HOW ON EARTH CAN SHE DEFEAT THEM? UNLESS OF COURSE THERE WAS SOMEONE TO HELP HER
SOMEONE EVEN STRONGER THAN HER FATHER ?

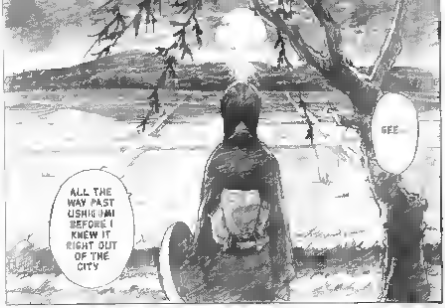
GIRL CHILD! YOU MUST BUY YOURSELF A BODYGUARD
THE STRONGEST TOUGHEST YOJIMBO OF ALL !

"OH YES DEARIE HE'S SOMEWHERE HERE IN EDO
"THE MAN WITH THE LIFE THAT NEVER RUNS OUT JUST LIKE ME..

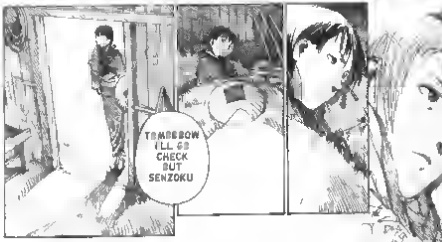
"MADE A VOW, DIDN'T HE? TO PURGE A LITTLE SIN OF HIS HE SAW HE'D KILL A THOUSAND CRIMINALS!
A PRIVATE LITTLE VENDETTA BUT, CHILD, I DON'T SEE HOW HE COULD TURN YOU DOWN !
"SOMEWHERE IN EDO" ? GET REAL. I'M SUPPOSED TO SEARCH EIGHT-HUNDRED AND-EIGHT WARDS BY MYSELF?

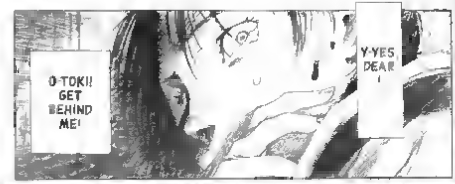
AND THIS WHOLE "IMMORTAL" BUSINESS STILL SOUNDS CRAZY TO ME
HMPH MAYBE IM THE CRAZY ONE FOR WEARING MY LEGS OUT LOOKING FOR HIM
THAT WEIRD YADOKUNI COULD JUST BE MAKING IT UP

ECAD IN FACE ONE EYE MANJI SYMBOL FACE SHOWS HE WAS BORN UNDER A BAD SIGN BLACK AND WHITE KIMONO NEVER TAKES A BATH


ALL THE WAY PAST USHIGOME BEFORE I KNEW IT RIGHT OUT OF THE CITY
SEE...

IT'S KINDA DUMB TO WASTE MONEY ON AN INN. THIS'LL BE GOOD ENOUGH.


TOMOBOW I'LL GO CHECK OUT SENZOKU


O-TOKI! GET BEHIND ME!
Y-YES, DEAR!

I'M A LITTLE BIT ANNOYED ABOUT YOU DYING BEFORE I'VE SEEN MORE OF YOUR MUTENICHI RYU STYLE BUT

WELL, I GUESS I'VE HAD ENOUGH EXERCISE FOR NOW

I GET THE GENERAL IDEA. WE'RE WASTING TIME BESIDES IF I WAS GOING TO KILL YOU MYSELF
WHY'D BOTHER TO BRING MY MEN ALONG?

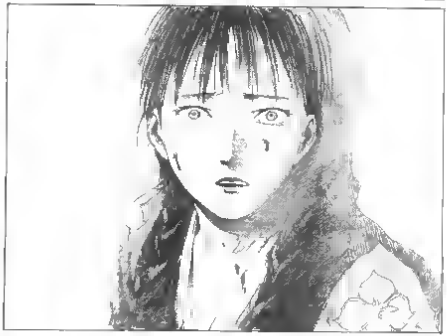
FWKSSH

KURO!!
FINISH HIM YOU HAVE FIVE SECONDS

I AM HONORED.
ANOTSU! YOU ROTTEN LITTLE PUNK!
HOW DARE YOU MOCK ME?!
HYAAAH!!

?!
WHOOSH

THE BELL RINGS AGAINST A HOLLOW SKY. THE RAVEN CAWS. NO MERCY!
ALL SAMURAI WALK THE PATH TO HOTAI NIRVANA. *KUROI SABATO*



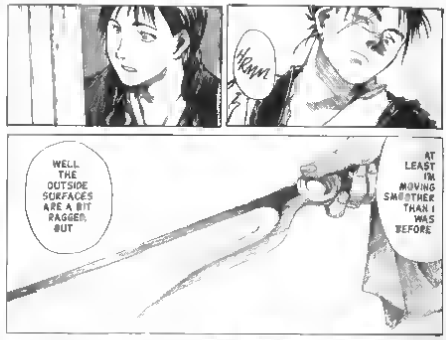
A DREAM ?
IT'S MORNING

I REMEMBER...

THAT WAS MY FOURTEENTH BIRTHDAY

MAN
JI ?
YOU'RE FINALLY UP ARE YOU? TOO BAD.
DON'T COME OUT YET OR YOU'LL GET STUCK FULL OF SPLINTERS
?
HUH? UM, OKAY!
=HAHH= =HFF=
=HAHH=...

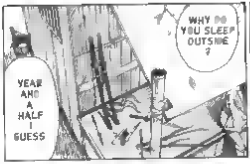
THWAP


HMM
WELL THE OUTSIDE SURFACES ARE A BIT RAGGED, BUT
AT LEAST I'M MOVING SMOOTHER THAN I WAS BEFORE

WOW. DO YOU UM. DO ALL YOUR FIREWORP THAT WAY?
HELL, NO. YOU THINK I'M NUTS, KID?
GEE SORRY HEH HEH HEH...
SEE YA LATER
SEE YA, ME

HMM I DON'T KNOW IT WAS LIKE THIS OUT BACK

SORRY I KINDA BURNED IT
HEY KID!
THAT STONE THERE IS THAT A GRAVESTONE?
SO, UM HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN LIVING HERE LIKE THIS?


YEAR AND A HALF I GUESS
WHY DO YOU SLEEP OUTSIDE?

I DON'T USUALLY EXCEPT WHEN LITTLE GIRLS STEAL MY BED

BUT AROUND HERE THERE'S MORE HOSTILE THINGS IN THE BUSHES A KID LIKE YOU WALKS AROUND HERE UNPROTECTED!
NO TELLING WHAT'LL HAPPEN HEY?

THANKS FOR THE THOUGHT, Y KNOW I'M KIND OF RELIEVED YOU'RE NOT HALF AS SCARY AS I FIGURED

I MEAN YOU'RE MANJI RIGHT?
FINALLY I WON'T BE TRAVELING ALONE ANYMORE

HMM I SEE! YOU WANT TO GET YOUR PARENTS' KILLERS
HUH BIG TALK KID I'M IMPRESSED

HONI I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE ANOTO ITTO-RYU IS BTW
BUT THEY SAID THEY WERE GOING TO CONQUER AND UNIFY ALL THE SWORD SCHOOLS
SOOO SO THAT MEANS IF WE HIT EVERY FAMOUS DO... DO DOOR THEN SOMETIME WE'LL...

PLEASE! I BEG YOU! HELP ME!
WITH OUR SWORD SKILLS AND YOUR IMMORTAL BODY WE CAN

G WAN KID RUN ALONG BEFORE IT GETS DARK

OH OF COURSE! HOW SILLY OF ME!
OF COURSE I CAN PAY YOU
IT'S NOT MUCH BUT
DON'T TALK LIKE AN IDIOT WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT MONEY?

UMM MANJI DIDN'T REALLY WANT TO BRING THIS UP
BUT I HEARD YOUR STORY FROM YAOBIKUNI
TO ATONE FOR SOME... SOME SIN IN YOUR PAST SHE SAID YOU WOULDN'T REFUSE ME BUT BUT YOU
NOW IT'S YOUR DESTINY TO KILL ONE THOUSAND CRIMINALS

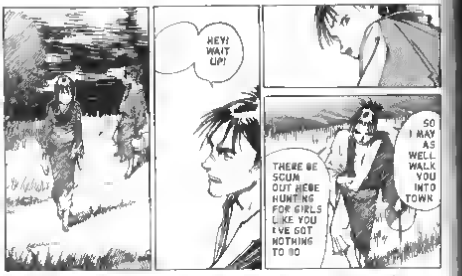
FIVE TIMES KID FIVE TIMES PEOPLE'VE COME ASKING ME JUST LIKE YOU
'PLEASE MISTER MANJI KILL FOR ME!'

PROBLEM IS, IF I'M GONNA DO THAT I GOTTA KNOW WHO'S GOOD GOTTA KNOW WHO'S EVIL
SO YOU TELL ME, YOUNG LADY, HOW THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO JUDGE THAT? EH?!
SURE. IF I KILL THESE GUYS, MY EMPLOYERS'LL BE HAPPY
BUT WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT PROVE?!
SHIT. PEOPLE ALL THINK THEY'RE FRIGGIN' SAINTS WHEN IT COMES TO TELLIN THEIR STORY. THAT'S THE PROBLEM
BANG!
I WON'T WANT TO BE A CO CONSPIRATOR WITH EVERYONE WHO COMES ALONG ACTING LIKE AN ANGEL WHIN NG THEY RE A VICTIM!
I DO THAT I'M JUST ANOTHER CRIMINAL MYSELF HEY?!
B BUT THEY MURDERED MY FATHER!!
RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES!
AND AND MY MOTHER
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF SHE S STILL ALIVE
SO YOU'RE GONNA SAY "MOM AND DAD NEVER DID ANYTHING WRONG" ?! RIGHT?
USE YOUR HEAD, KID! NO SAMURAI, ESPECIALLY A KENDO LIKE THIS ANOTSU GUY, EVER KILLS ANYONE JUST FOR NOTHING.
MY FATHER WENT OVER THE EDGE POISONED BY HIS HATE AND DESPAIR
YOU'RE ON A VENDETTA, THAT'S ALL. I COULD TELL AS SOON AS YOU OPENED YOUR YAP
HELL, I DON'T HAVE ANY CLASS EITHER. THIS ANOTSU, LOOKS LIKE HE AND ABE IN THE SAME BOAT
THE DAY YOU HIRE SOMEONE LIKE ME, WHAT HAPPENS TO ALL YOUR MORAL SUPERIORITY? EH?! HAH!
BUT...
BUT, M... I JUST

IT HURTS IT HURTS SO BAD! THERE WERE SO MANY OF THEM! IT WASN'T FAIR!
AND TO KILL HIM LIKE THAT THAT WAY
WELL, SHIT
HURTS SO MUCH YOU GOTTA CRY ?
ARE YOU REALLY SURE? YOU'LL GIVE UP EVERYTHING FOR REVENGE?
YES
ALL RIGHT THEN! THEN SHOW ME!
RIGHT NOW!
EH ?
I'M SAYING PROVE IT GIRL
PROVE YOU'RE REALLY SO SERIOUS ABOUT IT.
BUT BUT !
WHAT'S WRONG ?
YOU ALL TALK ?
OKAY OKAY THEN! YOU YOU MAY DO WITH ME
WHATEVER YOU WANT

SMAK

A K.O LIKE YOU SHOULDN'T MAKE A JOKE LIKE THAT!
GET YOUR DAMN CLOTHES BACK ON!
LOOK I'M SORRY KID.
IT'S JUST YOU LOOK LIKE MY LITTLE SISTER
SO I HIT YOU LIKE I MEANT IT HEY ?
GOOD-BYE, MANJI


HEY! WAIT UP!
SO I MAY AS WELL WALK YOU INTO TOWN
THERE BE SCUM OUT HERE HUNTING FOR GIRLS LIKE YOU I'VE GOT NOTHING TO DO

ABOUT TIME I GOT SOME PRACTICE ON REAL FLESH AND BLOOD!
HELL MAYBE I'LL EVEN GET THE CHANCE TO WHACK ONE OR TWO ON THE WAY

悲しみを振りかざす空を巡るは
会ひたい望郷と夢と果て
黒衣の踊人

A BEAUTIFUL VERSE SIR POET

I FIND THE ACT OF POETICAL CREATION ABSORBING

TRULY ONE DOES BEST WHAT ONE LOVES MOST
YOUR LETTER SIR IT TOUCHED ME DEEPLY

AN EMBARRASSING SCRIBBLE
NO NO INDEED YOU HAVE THE POET'S TOUCH
I TOO HAVE BROUGHT A VERSE ALTHOUGH I HESITATE
I WAIT ON MY LADY

WHOSE WORK IS THAT?

SPURRED ON BY THESE MANY TROTHS OF LOVE I THOUGHT I WOULD TRY
MY OWN CHILDISH HAND.

BUT I AM IN THE PRESENCE OF A MASTER MY LADY!
YOU ARE TOO KIND SIR I CAN ONLY ASPIRE TO THE SPIRIT OF ANCIENT METAL

THEN MY OWN PAIN-STAKING WORDS OF LOVE?
OR THEY CLASH IN YOUR EARS..?
THEY RING SWEETLY, GOOD SIR.
AND/OR THEY CARRY TO MY LADY THE FEELINGS OF MY INNER-MOST HEART?
YES TO SOME DEGREE
I COULD ASK NO GREATER BLESSING AND NOW, WITH YOUR UNDERSTANDING
...I SHALL TAKE MY LADY'S LIFE
IN LOVE I SEEK PERFECTION PERFECT LOVE THY NAME IS DEATH
I HAVE LOVED YOU FROM THE MOMENT I SAW YOU LADY FA RI FEB ALL ETERNITY NO OTHER SHALL COME BETWEEN US!

YOUR HAIR YOUR EYES ALL THAT'S MOST BEAUTIFUL
I SHALL MAKE MINE! MINE ALONE!
YOUR PRAISE IS AN HONOR
BUT IN FACT MY LORD, I TOO SEEK A DEATH TODAY YOURS!
IS THAT SO! HOW FORTUITOUS LET US GO HAND IN HAND, MY LADY
AND PRAY TOGETHER ON THE SLOPES OF FUJI!!
THANK YOU FOR THE KIND THOUGHT
BUT YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO PRAY

--ALONE, KURO! SABATO!
HOW DARE YOU SEND THIS... THIS RUBBISH TO OUR BOSS EVERY DAY FOR TWO YEARS!
WELL, HERE AM SO SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING. BUT AT LAST MY PREPARATIONS ARE COMPLETE
I HATE THAT SQUINTY EYED BOSS OF YOURS
BUT IT'S YOU I HATE MOST OF ALL!

FIRST I'LL CUT YOU DOWN THE MAN WHO KILLED MY FATHER...
AS THE PROLOGUE TO MY BLOODY DRAMA OF REVENGE!
SUCH BEAUTY...
"YOUR FACE IN SUBTLE MOONLIGHT BATED, GLOWS LIKE AN ANGEL COME FROM HEAVEN"...!
SPLIT
IT WAS WORTH WAITING TWO YEARS FOR THIS MOMENT
!
VOOF
HOW ABOUT THAT GIRL...
THOSE LOVE LETTERS REALLY WERE FOR YOU

?!
HEY, THIS IS KIND OF CREEPY— SENDS THE OLD CHILLS DOWN MY SPINE
NUTTING ON A GIRL YOUNG ENOUGH TO BE YOUR OWN DAMN DAUGHTER EH?!

AH WELL IT SAVED US THE HASSLE OF HUNTING YOU DOWN ANYWAY THANKS PAL

OKAY RIN-STEP ASIDE AN AMATEUR CAN'T FIGHT A GUY WHO DOES IT TWO HANDED
IT'S LIKE AN ANT FIGHTING GOD.

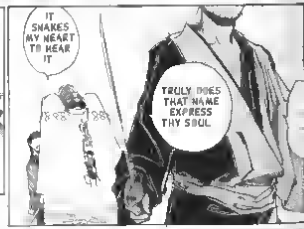
I'M NO AMATEUR! I'VE BEEN WAIT I MEAN I'VE BEEN TRAINING FOR TWO WHOLE YEARS!

TRY THAT AGAIN WHEN YOUR HANDS AREN'T SHAKING IDIOT

NOW THEN UNCLE SABATO!

NOT MANY THRILLS FIGHTING LITTLE GIRLS ANYWAY HEY? HOW ABOUT US TWO HANDED HERETICS OF THE SWORD GO AT IT LIKE WILD MEN?!
WE'LL MAKE THE SKY RAIN BLOOD, EH YOU OLD GEEZER!

RIN IS THAT MY LADY'S NAME ?

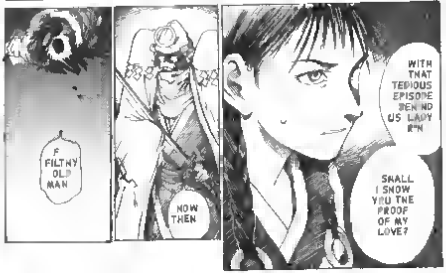

IT SHAKES MY HEART TO HEAR IT
TRULY DOES THAT NAME EXPRESS THY SOUL.

HEY!
ASSHOLE
!
DON'T YOU JUST WALK BY ME LIKE I'M NOT HERE! I'LL-

KBLOOSH
HUH?
YOU ANNOY ME YOUNG MAN THIS IS AN IMPORTANT MOMENT FOR ME
ARE YOU BLIND TO THIS ??

AS YOU CAN SEE I'VE TRAINED MY BODY TO ROTATE COMPLETELY BACKWARDS
NOT EVEN A MASTER SUCH AS YOU CAN TAKE ME FROM BEHIND, FOOL!
AH!
THE GROUPS HAS RETURNED, WE CANNOT AFFORD TO TALK TOO
AND THIS IS IT?!

NOW THAT YOU UNDERSTAND, HURRY UP AND D E
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN TALKING WITH MEN


F FILTHY OLD MAN
HOW THEN
WITH THAT TEDIOUS EPISODE BEHIND US LADY ERN
SHALL I SHOW YOU THE PROOF OF MY LOVE?

HAVE NO FEAR OF DEATH, MY LADY
FOR I WILL FOLLOW CLOSE BEHIND YOU

SHRKK
WAS

CURTAIN OF DEATH!

?!

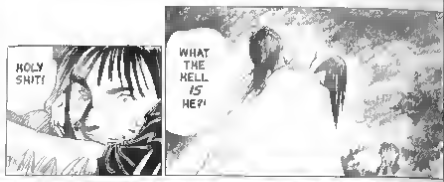
FLIGHT of the GOLDEN WASPS!!

HUAAA!
TANG TANG TANG TANG

SPLENDID!

MY FACE AND SHOULDERS HAVE NOT BEEN EXPOSED...

...FOR O SO VERY LONG, MY LADY!


HOLY SHIT!
WHAT THE HELL IS HE?!

HEH HEH...
REALLY MY DEAR... THERE'S NO REASON TO BE AFRAID.

I LIVE FOR THE GLORY OF FEMININE BEAUTY. BUT ALAS, I FIND OLDER WOMEN UNPLEASANT TO GAZE UPON. BATHED THAN WATCH THEM WITHER AND FADE. HOW MUCH BETTER TO HAVE THOSE I LOVE STUFFED AND KEEP THEM NEAR AT HAND. NEVER TO AGE?
WHAT MAN HASN'T THOUGHT THAT IN HIS HEART OF HEARTS?

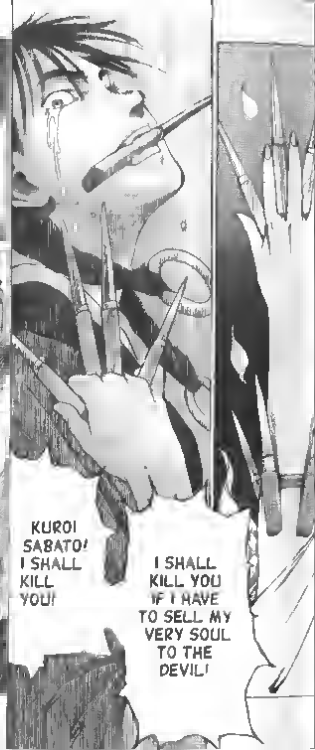
NOW, THIS THIS IS THE WOMAN WHO USED TO BE MY WIFE
A LITTLE BEAUTY, YES? BUT TOO STRONG WILLED! AND THIS

FWOO
AAGH!!!
NO
NO!!
TH-THAT... ON YOUR...
OH, GOD... THIS C-CAN'T BE HAP-PENING!
...OTHER SHOULDER... IS IT—

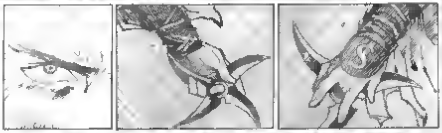
YES INDEED JUST TWO YEARS AGO THIS WAS THE WOMAN YOU CALLED MOTHER!

THOSE OTHER WORTHLESS TRASH WERE SO BRUTAL IN THEIR AFFECTIONS
I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF ACTING ON MY LOVE IT SEEMED THE ONLY DECENT THING TO DO

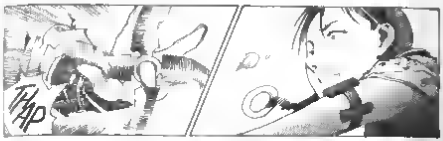
SHE'S FAR TOO FLAWLESS A WOMAN.
FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT APPRECIATE SUCH PERFECTION!
DEATH
DEATH


KUROI SABATO! I SHALL KILL YOU!
I SHALL KILL YOU IF I HAVE TO SELL MY VERY SOUL TO THE DEVIL!

FLIGHT
of the
GOLDEN
WASPS



KANG KANG KANG
KANG


THAP

ARE YOU TRYING TO HURT YOUR HONORABLE MOTHER?!
YOU SAID YOU WOULD KILL ME LADY RIN VERY WELL!! I AM ALWAYS READY TO DIE BUT FOR ONE THING!
MY FINAL DREAM I WISH TO SEE MY LADY DIE IN ETERNAL BEAUTY!
AT SUNSET I SHALL CUT AWAY THE WOMAN ON MY LEFT AND UPON MY OWN SHOULDERS
I SHALL RE-CREATE THOSE NOSTALGIC DAYS OF MOTHER AND LOVING DAUGHTER TOGETHER

AND LASTLY... LASTLY I WILL PREVAIL UPON MY FRIENDS TO HAVE MYSELF STUFFED AS WELL!
TOGETHER WE WILL RISE ON THE PETALS OF THE LOTUS... WE WILL SHARE OUR LIVE IN THE LAND OF NIRVANA, PERFECT IN OUR BEAUTY!
THIS IS THE ULTIMATE PROOF OF MY LOVE!
DON'T YOU SEE?
FAREWELL MY LADY
NF UF !
I DIE HERE... THEN

YES THAT IS CORRECT IF YOU DIE
THEN I THE ONE YOU HATE SHALL FOLLOW
IT SEEMS AT LAST YOU UNDERSTAND
YOU YOU'LL KEEP YOUR PROMISE WON'T YOU?
IN MY OWN WAY AM STILL SAMURAI SO YES
AFTER YOU GO ON BEFORE ME
FATHER MOTHER
IM COMING
KICHOK
Y YOU ?!
HOW IN HELL ?!

NOW ARE YOU HUMAN?!
ALL THAT BLOOD!

I'VE ALREADY PAID FOR THAT ONE!
DON'T TAKE SOMEONE ELSE'S WOMAN WITH YOU YOU FREAKING PERVERT!

BUT
BEATS ME PAL. NOW LOOK YOU AND YOUR HEALS WANT TO BE FINE BY ME

SHAK
SHAK

THok THok
THok
I'M LIVING WITH THIS KARMA SEE? CAN'T USE MY BLADES EXCEPT IN ANGER

YOU'RE LUCKY YOU CAN DIE!!!
RYAAAA

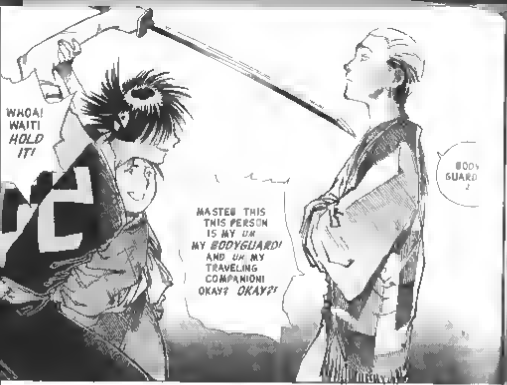
MANJI !!
M NO...! I THOUGHT YOU WERE IMMORTAL...?!
YOU DAMNED LITTLE IDIOT!
EH ?
WHAT THE HELL WERE YOU THINKING WHEN YOU WENT LOOKING FOR ME ?
SO NOW SABATO'S DEAD. ARE YOU SATISFIED?!
I GUESS SO YOU STUPID KID!
IF A LOVE SUICIDE W TH ONE LOUSY UNDERLING IS ALL YOU MEANT BY REVENGE! HELL, YOU ALMOST LET HIM TALK YOU INTO T!

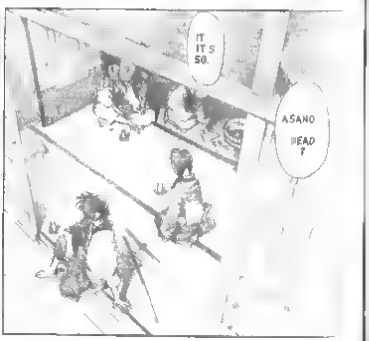
YOUR FATHER AND ALL HIS STUDENTS ARE DEAD, GIRL. IF YOU DON T KEEP IT GO NG YOUR PRE CIOUS MUTENICHI RYO IS FINISHED.
YOU DON T GOT THE RIGHT TO RISK YOUR LIFE FOR ANYTHING SO SMALL AS ONE DEAD GUY!
EVEN ANOTSU S GRANDKID IS FIGHT NG FOR HIS OWN DAMNED SCHOOL REMEMBER?!
I UNDER STAND, NOW I DO
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINK
BESIDES WHICH, GIRL, I'VE ALREADY BOUGHT THAT SCRAWNY BODY OF YOURS REMEMBER?

A BEISHA HOUSE IN OLD EDO'S, YOSHIWARA PLEASURE DISTRICT
HUH...? BE LUCKY TO GET TEN RYO FOR YOU AT TATSUMI NOW...
WITH YOU STILL SMELLING OF BABY MILK BUT FOUR, FIVE YEARS FROM NOW, I CAN REALLY CASH IN
HERE'S THE DEAL... I PROTECT YOU FOR FOUR YEARS. OKAY? YOU SEE THE WAY I LET SOMEONE SCRATCH YOUR PRICE DROPS TO NOTH!
SO ALL YOU CARE ABOUT IS MONEY?! YOU MAGGOTY MONSTER !!
KCHOK
ARRGH!!!
AND YOU CALL YOURSELF HUMAN !?!
GENIUS

VWIP VWIP
SPLAT SPLAT
FATHER...
YOU'VE GOT A VISITOR
BE THERE IN A SEC
I'VE SAID IT BEFORE BUT CAN'T YOU JUST SIT AND PAINT LIKE EVERYONE ELSE FATHER?
I MEAN YOU'VE MASTERED THIS "SWORDPAINTING" STUFF BY NOW
DAMN NOT THIS COLOR EITHER
AND IN THE ONE WHO HAS TO CLEAN UP AFTERWARDS AND APOLOGIZE TO THE LANDLORD.
IF WE GET THROWN OUT OF THIS HOUSE TOO WE'LL REALLY HAVE NO PLACE LEFT TO GO.
OH WOW
AND JUST WHEN WE'D FINALLY FOUND A HOUSE WITH A GARDEN TOO
OKAY I UNDERSTAND I'M SORRY TATSU

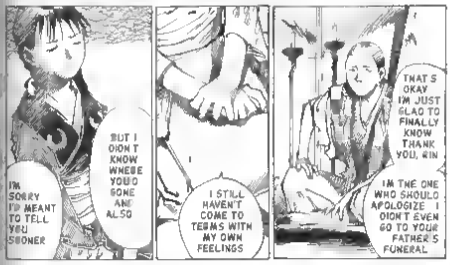
MASTER SÖRI !
AH
DON'T TELL ME... NOT LITTLE RIN?!
WHOA! YOU'RE ALL GROWN UP! HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN? FOUR YEARS?!
I KNOW I KNOW!! IT'S BEEN SO LONG !!
THIS IS SO GREAT!! WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING ALL THESE YEARS MASTER SÖRI?
EH? SIR IT'S REALLY YOU!
OI!
WHAT THE HELL IS THIS CRAP? OLD-HOME WEEK?!
LOOKS TO ME LIKE WE'RE WASTING OUR TIME HERE HE'S JUST A LOUSY PAINTER!
I KNOW THIS GREAT SWORDSM WHO'LL HELP US YOU SAY WE DR OUR BUTTS ALL OVER THE WHOL FREAKIN' CITY A WHAT DO WE FIND?! SOME WIM ARTIST!
SO WHAT'S YOUR EXCUSE? WERE YOU ABANDONED AT BIRTH ON MOUNT TAKAO AND RAISED BY MONKEYS?

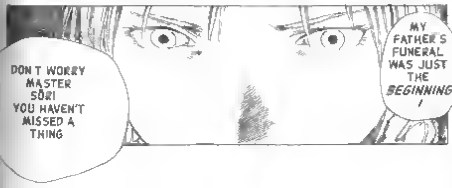

WHOA! WAIT! HOLD IT!
MASTER! THIS THIS PERSON IS MY UH MY BODYGUARD! AND UH MY TRAVELING COMPANION! OKAY? OKAY?!
BODY GUARD ?


IT IT'S SO.
ASANO HEAD ?

WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER'S NCE WE WERE KIDS EVEN WHEN I WAS APPRENT CEO TO THAT MIRROR MAKER IN NONSHO
THE ASANO CLAN WAS ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT CLIENTS

YOUR FATHER WASN'T THE SORT OF MAN WHO MADE ENEMIES
TO THINK OF HIM KILLED LIKE THIS OVER SOME ANCIENT GRUDGE IT'S JUST TOO MUCH


I'M SORRY I'D MEANT TO TELL YOU SOONER
BUT I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU'D GONE AND ALSO
I STILL HAVEN'T COME TO TERMS WITH MY OWN FEELINGS
THAT'S OKAY I'M JUST GLAD TO FINALLY KNOW THANK YOU, RIN
I'M THE ONE WHO SHOULD APOLOGIZE I DIDN'T EVEN GO TO YOUR FATHER'S FUNERAL


DON'T WORRY MASTER SÔRI YOU HAVEN'T MISSED A THING
MY FATHER'S FUNERAL WAS JUST THE BEGINNING !

REVENGE ?!

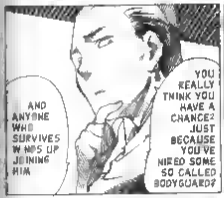
A YOUNG WOMAN LIKE YOU ?!

DON'T I JUST TELL YOU MASTER SORI? I STILL HAVEN'T COME TO TERMS WITH IT
MY MOTHER AND FATHER DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG!

I'VE TRAINED UNTIL MY HANDS BLED FOR TWO LONG YEARS
AND I'VE HIRED A BODYGUARD NOW IT'S JUST ONE STEP AWAY

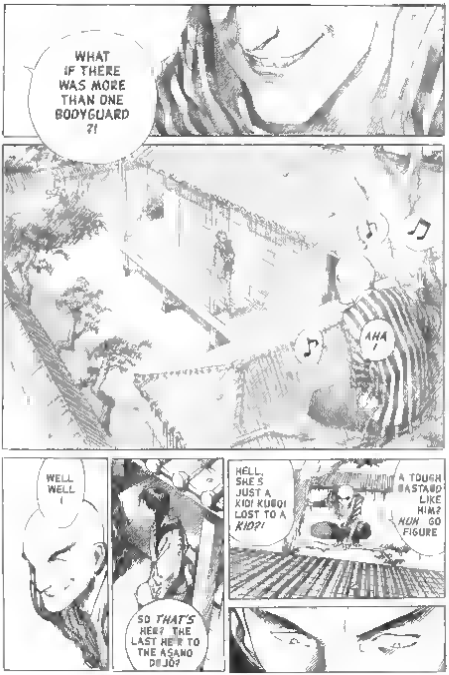
A FOOLISH DREAM KIN
I CAN'T LET THE DAUGHTER OF MY BEST FE END GO TO HER DEATH KNOW YOUR OWN LIMITS CHILD!

I'M NOT DREAMING !
HEY I'VE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT THIS ANOTSU GUY
THE TWENTY TWO-YEAR OLD GENIUS SWORDSMAN BUT TO UNIFY THE DIFFERENT SWORD SCHOOLS THANKS TO HIM EVERY DOJO EAST OF KASSAI IS IN RUINS


AND ANYONE WHO SURVIVES WINDS UP JOINING HIM
YOU REALLY THINK YOU HAVE A CHANCE? JUST BECAUSE YOU'VE HIRED SOME SO CALLED BODYGUARD?

MASTER SORI..

ALL RIGHT I AGREE YOU MAY BE RIGHT ABOUT THAT!!
BUT THERE'S STILL A WAY TO MAKE THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE!


WHAT IF THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE BODYGUARD ?!
AHA
WELL WELL !
SO THAT'S HER? THE LAST HEIR TO THE ASANO DOJO?
HELL, SHE'S JUST A KID! KUBOI LOST TO A KID?!
A TOUGH BASTARD LIKE HIM? HUH GO FIGURE

HEY THIS IS JUST CHOICE, MAN
W TH OLE WALKIN' FREAK SHOW KUBOI GONE WHEREVER TAKES OUT HIS KILLER
GETS TO BE THE BOSS RIGHT HAND MAN!
MUST FEEL PRETTY NICE HAVING A BUNCH OF GUYS WORKING UNDER YOU YEAH
HEH, HEH!
?
LOOK THAT SORT OF THING
IT'S JUST BEYOND ME RIN

I KNOW I'M ASKING A LOT!
AND WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE ASKING FOR YOUNG LADY? I'M JUST AN ARTIST
I WOULDN'T ASK JUST AN ARTIST TO HELP ME! I'M NOT STUPID!
THE PERSON I'M ASKING TO HELP ME IS
...IS MASTER SŌRI THE SHOGUN'S NINJA!
EH?!
HUH TO THINK YOU KNEW ABOUT THAT
ASANO YOU OLD BLABBER MOUTH NEVER COULD KEEP A SECRET COULD YOU?

I'VE HEARD THAT YOU WERE CHOSEN TO BE AN ONMITSU* BECAUSE OF YOUR CONTACTS AND BECAUSE OF YOUR SKILL IN THE ARTS OF WAR
AND I HEARD THAT WITH A SWORD YOU WERE EVEN STRONGER THAN MY FATHER!
PLEASE HEAR MY REQUEST MASTER SŌRI
TAKE UP YOUR SWORD!
WE ARTISTS ARE A STRANGE BREED, MISTRESS KIM
IF WE'RE NOT STIMULATED BY SOMETHING NEW OUR INSPIRATION BEGINS TO DECAY
FOR ME THAT STIMULATION WAS WESTERN PAINTINGS COPPERPLATE PRINTS BY FOREIGN BARBARIANS

BUT AS YOU KNOW IN THIS COUNTRY THE WAY THINGS ARE NOW IF ANYBODY TRIES TO COLLECT THAT STUFF...
THE AUTHORITIES WILL BE ON HIM IN A SECOND.
OH, YEAH YOU CAN SAVE YOUR MONEY AND BRIBE THE SAILORS ON THE TRADING SHIPS TRY TO GET ON THEIR GOOD SIDE BUT IT'S MOSTLY A WASTE OF TIME
SO, WHAT'S A POOR ARTIST TO DO? WHY THE FASTEST, EASIEST WAY TO GET YOUR HANDS ON BANNED ART IS TO BECOME ONE OF THE AUTHORITIES YOURSELF!
SO YOU BECAME A SHINOBI METSUKE"
I POLISHED UP MY SWORD WORN TRAVELED THE COUNTRY GATHERING INTELLIGENCE I DID WHATEVER I HAD TO TO BREAK MY WAY INTO THE INNER CIRCLE OF THE SHOGUNATE
I'VE KILLED ANTI SHOGUNATE DISSIDENTS ON THE ORDERS OF THE COUNCIL OF ELDERS I'VE SOLD OUT OTHER ARTISTS MY PEERS EVEN MY OWN FRIENDS
I'VE DRAGGED MY SWORD THROUGH THE MUD!
I JUST CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO USE SUCH A FOULED AND DISHONORED BLADE TO AVENGE MY DEAREST FRIEND.

HEH, HEH! HEY MAN
HEH
HEH HEH, HEH
THANKS FOR THE AMUSING SOLILOQUY YOU'RE A BORN COMEDIAN, PAL!
WHY DO YOU LAUGH?
RIN THIS FRIEND OF YOURS HE'S A REAL PIECE OF WORK
AND I DON'T MEAN SELLING OUT HIS FRIENDS AND ALL THAT

SO, UNCLE SÖRI... YOU TELL ME USING THOSE DIRTY HANDS OF YOURS TO HELP THE CHILD OF YOUR BEST FRIEND.
OR
ABANDONING A KID WHO DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE ON HER OWN
AND SENDING HER OUT TO DIE LIKE A DOG? WHICH ONE IS MORE DISHONORABLE? EH?!
YOU REALLY DON'T GIVE A SHIT WHAT YOU DO TO GET YOUR PRECIOUS ART
BUT WHEN IT'S JUST SOME GIRL'S LIFE AT STAKE NO PROFIT IN IT TOO MUCH HASSLE
JABBERING ON ABOUT "FRIENDSHIP" AND "HONOR" AND ALL THAT CRAP!
LET'S BE HONEST HERE BUDDY
HELL, YOU JUST DON'T WANT TO ADMIT THAT ALL YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT IS YOURSELF! EH? RIGHT?!

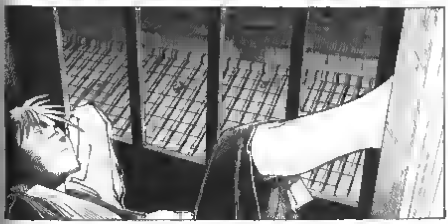
SO WHAT AM I LAUGHING AT? I'M LAUGHING AT YOUR WINNING PERSONALITY! MAKING ALL THESE LAME EXCUSES WHEN ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS SAY "HEY THIS IS WHO I AM--YOU DON'T LIKE IT, TOUGH LUCK!"
RIGHT ?
A RATHER HARSH OPINION BUT I CAN'T DENY IT
I'M JUST NOT READY TO DIE I'VE GOT A MOUNTAIN OF THINGS LEFT TO PAINT
AND I'M NOT ASHAMED. IT'S JUST HOW WE ARTISTS ARE, HEY?
OBN'T GIVE ME THAT CRAP! ARTISTS! BAH!

SO YOU GOT YOUR ANSWER RIGHT? I'LL GO FIND A PLACE FOR THE NIGHT
AH?! W-WAIT! MANJI !
PAINT ALL THE FRAMED PICTURES YOU LIKE MASTER SÔRI!

KCHK
MANJI NO! LISTEN TO ME!
EEK!
EH
IT'LL BE DARK SOON
YOU BETTER STAY HERE TONIGHT
YOU AND TATSU MUST HAVE A LOT TO CATCH UP ON
BUT BUT !

AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT HIM
HE'S NOT THE KIND OF GUY TO LEAVE YOU STRANDED. JUST A HUNCH

AN GOOD DAY MASTER SÔ ABOUT MY PAINTING.
AH MASATAKA SAN. THE PAINTING. YES I'M GOING TO NEED A FEW MORE DAYS



RIN ?
RIN RIN DEAR
YOU'RE ALWAYS SUCH A SLEEPY HEAD, DEAREST RIN
IF YOU ALWAYS SLEEP LATE YOU'LL NEVER FIND A GOOD HUSBAND
AH ? MOTHER? IT'S YOU?
OH, MOTHER! RIN JUST HAD THE MOST AWFUL DREAM
GOODNESS ME. SO AWFUL YOU CRIED?
UH HUH! THERE WERE THESE MEN MOTHER. THEY CAME HERE AND THEY THEY

RIN! SO MY LITTLE RINS A BIG FOURTEEN TODAY!
YAY! DADDY'S HOME BUT THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH HIS SHOULDERS ?
BOTH MOTHER AND FATHER HOME FOR MY BIRTHDAY! I'M SO HAPPY
IT WAS ALL A DREAM
THANK GOODNESS I WOKE UP THANK GOODNESS
I'M SO GLAD IT WAS JUST A DREAM
YO HO MY DEAR, IT'S MORNING!
TIME TO GET UP, LITTLE SLEEPY HEAD!
MMM? AW, MOM
JUST A FEW MORE

EEK!!
FWAP
KOHOK

HO HO HO! YOU LIKE TO SLEEP DO YOU?!
THUK
BEATS LIKE YOU
...SHOULD SLEEP LIKE THE DEAD!!
FWAP
?!
DAMN IT
NNGH!

THOK!
AAGH!
NNF
OH WELL. IT'S MORE FUN CATCHING MICE WHEN THEY TRY TO ESCAPE
SSH
HEH HEH. FOR A "SLEEPY HEAD"
YOU'RE PRETTY QUICK ON YOUR FEET YOU LITTLE BITCH!

HRK ?!
TCH TCH TCH!! WHY'D YOU HAVE TO GO AND MAKE ME COME BACK HERE LIKE THIS
...AFTER I MADE SUCH A GRAND EXIT LAST NIGHT?

MANJI !
AND YOU, ALWAYS SLEEPING!
I THOUGHT I SAW THIS GUY SNIFFIN AROUN LAST NIGHT. HEY?
SO I STAKED OUT THE PLACE FROM THAT FIRE WATCH TOWER OVER THERE AND
EEK! MANJI... YOU'VE GOT BAD GUYS ALL AROUND YOU!
HAH! NOW I GET IT!
IT WAS YOU WHO SLEW KUROH
I THOUGHT IT WAS WE'RE
THAT FREAK WASN'T THE KIND OF GUY TO LET A WOMAN GET THE BEST OF HIM. HAH.
LISTEN UP BUDDY— WHICHEVER ONE OF US GUYS HERE KILLS YOU
HE GETS TO BE BOSS OF THE REST. FREE COMPETITION. HEY?
I SEE
"I SEE"...? "I SEE"...?! YOU THINK THIS IS A TIME TO ACT TOUGH?
YOU THINK YOU CAN GET ALL OF US WITH ONE LOUSY SWORD?!
NOT WITH ONE!
SHAKABANG!!

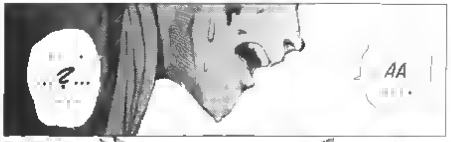
FUH
FUH
FUH

SWEAK
DAMN IT! THAT ISN'T THE RIGHT COLOR EITHER!!
YOUR PATH THE PATH YOU CHOOSE OVER AVENGING THE MURDER OF YOUR OWN BEST FRIEND
AND THIS IS THE BEST YOU CAN DO? WHAT A JOKE!

I'M SORRY I'M SORRY! I PROMISE NOT TO ATTACK YOU AGAIN!
THUMP THUMP
OK ?!
AIEEGHRK!
SPLCCH
EEEK!?
MANJI! HELP ME FOR A SEC OKAY?!
TANG TANG TANG

RED. THAT'S ALL. JUST RED. THE COLOR I SEE IN MY MIND'S EYE. THAT CERTAIN RED.
A RED I REMEMBER. A RED I'M POSITIVE I'VE SEEN A THOUSAND TIMES BEFORE
KCHK
CHAPAK!
THUD
SO MAYBE TRY META PHOR. A FLOWER? MAYBE. NO NO. ALL WRONG! QUIET. ? NO. NOT THAT.
A SUNSET! HMMM PROMISING BUT A BIT OF A LEAP...
HMMM!
NAH! TOO CLICHE!
THANKS HUH?
BUT YOU WON'T BELIEVE ARE YOU REALLY A GRAMMAR SCHOOL TEACHER.
BUT CLOSE! SOMETHING JUST AE PRIMAL. THE EDUIRCE OF ALL RED.
YEAH. EASY TO SAY SO!! BUT WHAT IS IT?
HMM. I'VE GOT THEM ON A D'OH! PUT THEM ON
O GODS IN HEAVEN!
EEK! HERE THEY COME AGAIN!
SEND ME A SIGN, DAMN IT!

RYAAAH!!
HYAA-
HUH?
SPLAT
SPLAT
SPLAT
HMPH


...?...
AA

TH THAT'S IT!!!

BWAHA
HAHHA

HEH
HEH HEH HEH

YES! THIS IS IT!
THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR!

--PRIMAL RED !!
THAT COLOR YOU CAN'T GET FROM ALL THE DYES AND PAINT IN THE WORLD

DAMN! I CAN FINISH IT NOW!
WITH THIS MUCH DONE THE REST WILL BE A SNAP!
RRAK
THREE MORE DAYS? TRY THREE HOURS !!
NOW THEN HOW TO GET THE BLOOD? GUESS I CAN DRAG IN A FEW OF THOSE BODIES OUT THERE AND—
SKRAK

ALL RIGHT! WHERE'S THAT DAMNED ESCAPEE FROM THE MORGUE?!
Y YOU YOU SON OF A
HAH! GOT HIM RIGHT WHERE I WANT H M!
HEE HEE!
CHOK
THNK
MY MY HANDS !
?!

HAIEE!
HA!
HA!
HO!
HAH!
HAH!
WHEW LOOK HERE PAL
YOU'VE GOT A COOL SPEAR BUT THE PROBLEM S THE SPEARMAN SSE? NOW A GOOD BLADE IS USED.
THE WAY YOU KEEP NOLLEBING LIKE THAT EVERY TIME YOU TAKE A SW NG AT ME NO WONDER YOU RE OUTTA BREATH

...LIKE THIS!
HUH ?!
HEY!!
WHAT THE HELL ?!
YEE HEE HEE HUH!
GOOD JOB HOT SHOT! YOU RE THE FIFTH IDIOT TO GET CAUGHT ON MY HOOKS!
WORKS GREAT ON ROUGH BARK TREES HEY?! YOUNG CLOWNS LIKE YOU THINK THEY RE JUST BITS OF BARK AND THEN YOU RE HOOKED!

WHY YOU AARGH!
GIVE IT UP BUDDY ONCE THEY GOT YOU
THEY CHEW RIGHT INTO YOUR FLESH AND DON'T LET GO!

AND SO HERE'S THE BIG QUESTION

I COULD JUST SHISH KEBOB YOU RIGHT AWAY
BUT SINCE YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE, I MIGHT AS WELL LIVEN THINGS UP A BIT FIRST KEY?
LESSEE FOR STARTERS..

I THINK I'LL SLICE THAT GIRL UP RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES!

HNNG!
RRG

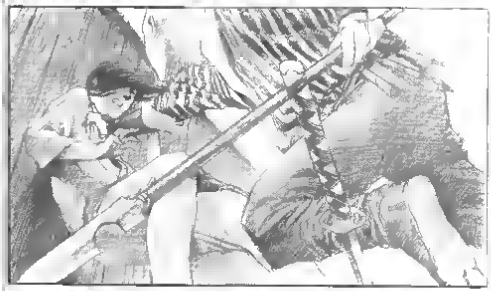
OH OH YEAH?! I JUST YOU TRY IT!
IF YOU THINK A LOSER LIKE YOU CAN DO IT COME ON!!

GEE, I DIDN'T EXPECT TO GET PERMISSION OKAY KID- LET'S DANCE!
DAMN IT SIN YOU STUPID IDIOT! HEY BALDY! COME BACK HERE AND FIGHT!

KA
THUNK
GNRK
MANJI !!
"BALDY" YOU SAY?
MAKE FUN OF PEOPLE LIKE THAT AND NO ONE'S GONNA LIKE YOU ONE-EYE

NOT BAD FOR A LITTLE BRAT
WHOA
WHISH
WHAP!

KRANG
HEH!
AH ?!
KRANG
CLANG



HKK
AH WELL SO MUCH FOR THAT EH, KID?

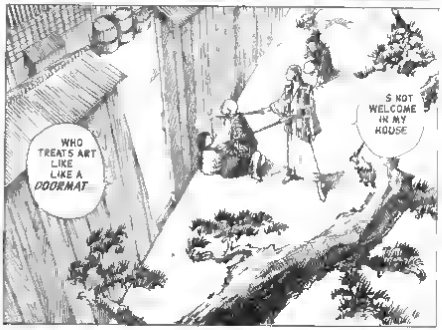
YOU OWE ME BIG TIME BEAT! YOU GUYS HAVE KILLED ALL MY MEN!
EVERY LAST ONE OF 'EM, HEY?!

NOW I WON'T GET A DAMN THING FOR KILLING YOU! ZIL CH!
SO I'M NOT FINISHED WITH YOU YET SEE?!
FOR YOUR CRIMES

I'LL FIX YOU UP LIKE THE PRIEST DARUMA*, AND LEAVE YOU TO REFLECT ON THE ERROR OF YOUR WAYS!
*A BUDDHIST WHO MEDITATED SO LONG HIS LIMBS WITHERED AWAY.

AAGHH--
-AAAAHHH!!
RIN...!
!!
?
UH
EXCUSE ME BUT
WHO THE HELL..
..DID THAT ?!

A PERSON


WHO TREATS ART LIKE LIKE A DOORMAT
S NOT WELCOME IN MY HOUSE

GET OUT !!

YOU KNOW I REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND IT
YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS GIRL
NO CONNECTION NO NOTHING SO WHY DO YOU PROTECT HER?
YESTERDAY WHEN YOU HEARD MY EXCUSE YOU LAUGHED IN MY FACE
ONCE UPON A TIME
BECAUSE OF ME MY SISTER WAS KILLED BEFORE MY EYES
SO WHAT IS IT? DO YOU GET OFF ON MARTYR-DOM?
EVEN TURNING YOURSELF INTO A BLOODY MESS

GGCH
SO I GOTTA TAKE OUT A THOUSAND BAD GUYS TO MAKE UP FOR IT THAT'S ALL
IT'S REALLY NONE OF MY CONCERN IF THIS GIRL LIVES OR DIES
IF THAT FACE OF HERS DON'T LOOK LIKE MY LITTLE SISTER
IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT DO YOU THINK I'D LET MYSELF IN FOR THIS CRAP?
HEY IT'S NO BIG DEAL YOU AND ME WE'RE THE SAME ANIMAL
OUR BODIES DO ONE THING BUT OUR HEADS MAN OUR HEADS ARE FULL OF OUR OWN BAD SHIT
HMM OKAY I CAN RELATE TO THAT

S SENSEI?
M MASTER SÛRIT
NAGASAKIYA SAN
Y YES SENSEI!
YOU DON'T NEED TO WORRY I'LL RESTORE IT AND YOU'LL HAVE IT IN THREE DAYS JUST AS PROMISED
R R REALLY? OH MY!
SENSEI! MOUTH A MORTAL

TRUTH BE TOLD, I WAS SWEATING ICE I THOUGHT I'D HAVE TO WAIT FOR MONTHS AGAIN.
GASP
HOWEVER MY RATES NOW THIRTY RYÔ
TH TH THIRTY RYÔ ?!!
BUT BUT AT FIRST YOU SAID FIVE.
EH MY DEAR
I'D LIKE TO BUY SOME CORPSES FROM YOU
WITH THIRTY RYÔ YOU CAN GO TWO OR THREE YEARS WITHOUT HAVING TO SLEEP ON THE STREET
EEHHH ?!
I-I-DON'T BELIEVE IT!
I... I CAN'T
WOW !!

IN THE END, THE "SAME ANIMAL" HMM?
THE REAL TEST IS WHETHER OR NOT YOU BE AT PEACE WITH YOURSELF ENOUGH TO WATCH SOMEONE ELSE LIVE THEIR LIFE THE WAY THEY'VE GOT TO LIVE IT
DON'T YOU THINK ?
MAN, OH MAN. FULL OF HIGH-FALUTIN CRAP TO THE END.
AREN'T YOU SENSEI ?

AN INTERVIEW WITH 無限の住人 HIROAKI SAMURA

Samurai stories are as old as the history of manga in Japan. But when Hiroaki Samura released Blade of the Immortal *in the pages of* Afternoon *comics, it sent a shock wave through the industry. Samura's nihilistic punk sensibility, masterful artwork, and science-fiction edge turns the old chestnut of "the lone swordsman steeped in Bushido" on its head. The immortal Manji is looking for a way to die, and he doesn't much care who gets in the way of his arsenal of exotic weapons. It's the unfrowning swordswoman Rin, seeking to avenge her father's murder, who firmly leads Manji to the only samurai in Japan who cares even less about Bushido than he does — the road-warrior swordsmen of Itto-ryu. The lesson is life, but it's written in blood.*

Studio Proteus *Where did* Blade of the Immortal *come from?*

Samura I set out with the idea of trying to create a new genre of manga. But even before that, back when I first started into comics, I told myself that I would make the problem of living in this world my lifelong theme. For that, I figured that *yakuza*-geki (period samurai dramas) would be better than something with a modern setting; death was a bigger part of life in Samurai times. But if I tried to make it totally real, I knew I'd get all kinds of complaints about accuracy from the samurai freaks. So I chose a style right from the beginning that said "don't obsess about the details. Look at the story."

SP *And the characters and storytelling?*

S. On the visual side, my biggest model has been *Tange Sazen*. I was blown away by the illustrations Hitsuru Shimura drew of Sazen, so I took the liberty of trying it myself. On the character side, as the protagonist Manji I've drawn a totally straight, unvarnished version of my own ideal hero — a person who never reveals his or her own weaknesses to others but who, at the same time, is not as unassailably powerful as he or she may seem. I didn't have a model for Rin herself, but after I drew her, my family started saying she looks like my younger sister.

SP *How did you become a manga artist?*

S. There's no story to tell, really. After I finished college, I submitted some of my work to *Afternoon*'s new talent contest, and I won it. It's not as if I came up with my pencil work on my own. In my circle of manga friends at school, there was an upperclassman who used pencil, and I learned a lot from him.

SP Blade of the Immortal *features all kinds of exotic swords and other weapons.*

S: Almost all of the weapons and combat techniques are my own creations. The Itto-ryu school of swordfighting is a play on the name of another, real school of swordsmanship, but the content is totally different. The Itto-ryu swordsmen and swordswomen reject all notions of "schools" of fighting and ritualistic formula. That's where they came up with all those crazy techniques they use. And by the way, I don't do any martial arts myself.

SP *Every episode features a dramatic duel, which you recreate on an almost mandala-like, full-page illustration. It seems like a lot of work.*

S I spend a full day on a two-page spread like that. It's not so much the actual drawing. What's really hard is finding the right pose. I chose black and white because, frankly, I don't like painting colors over art. I've never once thought I'd like to work in color.

SP *Like Masamune Shirow, you refuse to be photographed or to make public appearances. Can you tell us something about your personal life?*

S: Came into the world on February 17, 1969. Born in Chiba prefecture (near Tokyo) never married. I don't appear in public because I believe there's no reason for readers to know that much about the cartoonist. What matters is the art. As for hobbies: I don't really have one. But I have been drawing some erotic pictures of women, all kinds of variations. If enough of them pile up, I may put out a collection — on my own dime, of course.

COVER GALLERY

While this collected edition features Hiroaki Samura's cover art to *Blade of the Immortal* issue five, here and on the following three pages are the covers, in order of issues one, two, three, and six.